

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SYRIAN BLACKLIST OF U.S. JOURNALISTS

REF: (A) BEIRUT 3651; (B) BEIRUT 3758 (C) BEIRUT 4044

1. EMBASSY HAS BEEN IN CONTACT WITH MININF AND PRESIDENCY REGARDING BLACKLISTING OF JOE ALEX MORRIS, ED CODY AND JONATHAN RANDALL.

2. MINIF ACKNOWLEDGES THAT MORRIS AND RANDALL HAVE BEEN BANNED FROM WORKING IN SYRIA, BUT HINT THIS A TEMPORARY MEASURE. CONTACT IN PRESIDENCY HAD NOT HEARD OF MORRIS OR RANDALL CASES. STILL UNCLEAR WHAT STORIES OFFENDED SARG, BUT WILL CONTINUE TO PURSUE, IF ONLY TO DETERMINE WHETHER LIBERALIZATION OF POLICIES RE FOREIGN JOURNALISTS HAS BEEN TIGHTENED.

3. CODY CASE MORE CLEAR CUT. ACCORDING SOURCE IN PRESIDENCY SARG ANGERED OVER TWO STORIES THEY CONSIDER IRRESPONSIBLE. SPECIFICALLY, HIS JANUARY STORY CITING "HIGH SYRIAN GOVERNMENT SOURCE" FOR INFORMATION THAT SYRIAN REGULAR TROOPS WERE MOVING INTO
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LEBANON. ANOTHER STORY IN MARCH REPORTED "GROSSLY

INFLATED" NUMBER OF ARRESTS IN SYRIA GROWING OUT OF
UNREST OVER SARG POLICIES IN LEBANON.

4. OUR READING IS THAT CODY WILL BE "PUNISHED" FOR
A TIME, THEN ALLOWED TO RETURN. OF THREE, HOWEVER,
HE IS CLEARLY IN MOST TROUBLE.

5. FYI, EMBASSY HAS COACHED WASHINGTON POST'S WATSON,
WITH SUGGESTIONS FOR APPROACH TO MINIF FOR SOME
INDICATION OF NEW SYRIAN GUIDELINES FOR FOREIGN
JOURNALISTS, IF SUCH INDEED EXIST. HE WILL ALSO
PRESS FOR FURTHER INFORMATION ON OFFENDING STORIES
OF MORRIS AND RANDALL.

6. RE FIRST ADVISORY, THURSDAY AND FRIDAY SYRIAN
MINISTRIES CLOSED. UNABLE DETERMINE STATUS CODY OR
MORRIS BEFORE SATURDAY. WILL ADVISE.
KEITH

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